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10/015,072	12/11/2001	Hirohiko Yamazaki	KOT-0038	9474

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EXAMINER

AIRES, BENJAMIN A

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2142

SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
3 MONTHS	01/29/2007	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/015,072

Applicant(s)

YAMAZAKI ET AL.

Examiner

Benjamin A. Ailes

Art Unit

2142

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 November 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13, 17-20 and 45-48 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-13, 17-20 and 45-48 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. This action is in response to correspondence filed 16 November 2006.
2. Claims 1-13, 17-20 and 45-48 remain pending.

Specification

3. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities:
 - p. 1, line 9, "...on be network..." should be "...on the network..."
 - p. 1, line 11, "...are preset in..." should be "...are present in..."

Appropriate correction is required.

Response to Amendment

4. Applicants' substitute specification has been entered into the record. Prior objections to specification have been withdrawn.
5. Applicants' amendments to the claims with respect to informalities have been entered into the record. Prior objections to the claims have been withdrawn.
6. Applicants' cancellation of claims 27-39 renders the previous 35 USC 112, second paragraph rejection moot and therefore it has been withdrawn.
7. Applicants' cancellation of claims 25 and 26 renders the previous 35 USC 101 directed to non-statutory subject matter rejection moot and therefore it has been withdrawn.

Response to Arguments

8. Applicant's arguments, see REMARKS, filed 16 November 2006, with respect to failing to comply with the enablement requirement have been fully considered and are

Art Unit: 2142

persuasive. The 35 USC 112, First paragraph rejection of claims 14-16 has been withdrawn.

9. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1, 4, 9-11, 14-21, 24-25, 27-35 and 38-44 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

10. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

11. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

12. Claims 1, 4, 9-11, 17-20 and 45-48 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale et al. (US 5,125,075), hereinafter referred to as Goodale, in view of Tsuji et al. (US 6,047,315), hereinafter referred to as Tsuji.

13. Regarding claim 1, Goodale teaches a work flow system for circulating a digital document file to a plurality of clients through a network, comprising:

a transmission client for initially issuing a document file for circulation (col. 1, line 67 – col. 2, line 2), comprising:

a) a setup processing unit which sets destination information to specify destination and order of circulation (col. 2, ll. 7-10), and

b) a transmission processing unit which sends a circulation information file, including said destination information, and said document file to the next one of a plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said destination information (col. 2, ll. 8-14); and

said plurality of circulation clients for sequentially circulating said document file, transmitted by said transmission client (col. 2, ll. 8-14), each comprising:

a transmission processing unit which sends said circulation information file and said document file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said destination information, in response to a verification of said document file (col. 4, ll. 46-49 and col. 2, ll. 23-25, clients "vote" for approval).

Goodale teaches the sending of the circulation file but does not does not explicitly teach "wherein when the next one of plurality of circulation clients is incapable of circulation, said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients, conducts at least one of (1) notifying incapability of circulation by said next one of said plurality of circulation clients to other ones of said plurality of circulation clients or said transmission client, (2) sending said document file and said circulation information file to other one of said plurality of circulation clients

Art Unit: 2142

next to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients, (3) sending said document file and said circulation information file to a proxy client of said next one of said plurality of circulation clients". However, in related art, Tsuji teaches a document transmission system which includes a control information unit which includes with an electronic message information for controlling the status of the electronic mail message (col. 4, ll. 22-29). The control information monitors when a recipient is to satisfy certain conditions including deadlines to perform processing and the control information unit notifies the original sender when conditions are unsatisfied (col. 5, ll. 11-26). This teaches wherein when a client is incapable of performing operations at least the sender is notified of this case. One of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicants' invention would have found it obvious to incorporate the teachings of Tsuji of incorporating control information related to an electronic message with the document circulation method and system as taught by Goodale. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to make this combination because Tsuji and Goodale are directed towards the same field of endeavor, electronic messaging in a networked environment, and to advance the control of documents flowing in an office environment wherein it is advantageous to monitor the status of time sensitive documents (Tsuji, col. 1, ll. 8-14, col. 2, ll. 18-22, and 59-62).

14. Regarding claim 4, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein said circulation information file includes report destination information regarding a reporting destination of said transmission completion report (Goodale, col. 12, ll. 25-29, originator client is able to view the status of the document file, the document file being able to

report status to the originator, therefore the document file knowing the reporting destination is deemed an inherent characteristic.).

15. Regarding claim 9, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein said circulation information file includes storage location information of a storage destination after the circulation of said document file; and one of said plurality of circulation clients, to which said document file is circulated at last, stores said document file to said storage destination in said storage location information in response to a approval operation of said document file (Goodale, col. 4, ll. 54-63).

16. Regarding claim 10, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein said document file for circulation is created from an original document file stored in a predetermined storage (col. 5, ll. 20-23); said circulation information file includes original information of a storage destination of said original document and storage location information of a storage destination after the circulation of said document file (Goodale, col. 4, ll. 54-63); and one of said plurality of circulation clients, to which said document file is circulated at last, obtains said original document file in response to a approval operation of said document file in accordance with said original information, and stores said original document to said storage destination of said storage location information (Goodale, col. 4, ll. 54-63).

17. Regarding claim 11, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein said one of plurality of circulation clients, having received said document file and circulation information file, adds history information including a verification result of said document file to said circulation information file and sends said document file and circulation

Art Unit: 2142

information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients (Goodale, col. 4, ll. 46-53).

18. Regarding claim 17, Goodale and Tsuji teach a work flow system wherein said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, having received said document file and said circulation information file, adds correction information, for making a correction on said document file, to said circulation information file and sends said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients (Goodale, col. 11, ll. 44-56).

19. Regarding claim 18, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein one of said plurality of circulation clients, to which said document file is circulated at last, sends circulation completion report to other ones of said plurality of circulation clients in response to a approval operation of said document file (Goodale, col. 2, ll. 8-14, col. 4, ll. 46-49, and col. 12, ll. 32-39 and 46-53).

20. Regarding claim 19, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein said transmission client or each of said plurality of circulation clients comprises:

an information processing means for processing electronic information (Goodale, col. 4, ll. 11-14); and

a storage means for storing a file which is readable with said information processing means (Goodale, col. 4, ll. 22-26);

wherein said storage means stores said document file or said circulation information file when said document file or said circulation information file is received (Goodale, col. 4, ll. 22-26).

21. Regarding claim 20, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein said transmission client or each of said plurality of circulation clients comprises a display means for displaying a transmission button and sends said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said circulation information file, so as to be stored in said storage means of said next one of said plurality of circulation clients in response to an operation of said transmission button (Goodale, col. 11, ll. 44-47).

22. Claims 45-48 contain similar subject matter and are rejected under the same rationale as independent claim 1.

23. Claims 2, 3 and 5-8, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale and Tsuji in view of Mori et al. (US 6,526,425 B2), hereinafter referred to as Mori.

24. Regarding claim 2, Goodale and Tsuji teach the above limitations and further teaches "one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients" in column 2, lines 8-14 of Goodale. Goodale and Tsuji do not clearly teach the step of "sends a transmission completion report, regardless of said document file, to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients". However, in related art, Mori teaches on a document circulation method wherein a transaction log is maintained wherein the primary function is to log the circulation history of the document being circulated between clients. The circulation file can be sent along with the actual document being circulated among clients (see column 5, ll. 59-67). It would have been obvious to one of

Art Unit: 2142

ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to combine the document circulation method provided by Goodale and Tsuji and the document circulation method of logging transaction history of a circulation file taught by Mori. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to perform such a combination as taught by Mori wherein a system is provided so that clients in a network system can stay informed easily by way of a transaction log which is easily accessible in the network provided (see Mori, col. 2, ll. 62-65).

25. Regarding claim 3, Goodale teaches "wherein said transmission completion report is sent to a predetermined server in said network" in column 12, lines 46-53). Goodale and Tsuji do not clearly teach "said predetermined server sends circulation state information in response to a request from one of said transmission client and said plurality of circulation clients". However, in related art, Mori teaches on a document circulation method wherein clients can access the circulation history of a document by way of request. A client in the system can procure circulation history by way of an order (a request for information), which can be transmitted through the network and to the appropriate server (where the circulation history, the transaction log is stored) (column 2, line 66 – col. 3, line 4). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to combine the document circulation method provided by Goodale and Tsuji and the document circulation method of procuring transaction history of a circulation file as taught by Mori. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to perform such a combination as taught by Mori wherein a system is provided so that clients in a network system can stay informed easily by way

Art Unit: 2142

of a transaction log which is easily accessible in the network provided (see Mori, col. 2, ll. 62-65).

26. Regarding claim 5, Goodale and Tsuji teach the above limitations and further teaches "one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients" in column 2, lines 8-14 in Goodale. Goodale and Tsuji do not clearly teach the step of "sends said transmission completion report, regardless of said document file, to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients in accordance with said report destination information. However, in related art, Mori teaches on a document circulation method wherein a transaction log is maintained wherein the primary function is to log the circulation history of the document being circulated between clients. The circulation file can be sent along with the actual document being circulated among clients and to the appropriate designated locations (see column 5, ll. 59-67). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to combine the document circulation method provided by Goodale and Tsuji and the document circulation method of logging transaction history of a circulation file taught by Mori. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to perform such a combination as taught by Mori wherein a system is provided so that clients in a network system can stay informed easily by way of a transaction log which is easily accessible in the network provided (see Mori, col. 2, ll. 62-65).

27. Regarding claim 6, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein said reporting destination is a server for controlling a circulation of said document file

Art Unit: 2142

(Goodale, col. 12, ll. 25-30) and said one of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, sends said transmission completion report to said server (Goodale, col. 12, ll. 46-53). Goodale and Tsuji do not clearly teach "said server sends circulation state information in response to a request from one of said transmission client and said plurality of circulation clients in accordance with said transmission completion report". However, in related art, Mori teaches on a document circulation method wherein clients can access the circulation history of a document by way of request. A client in the system can procure circulation history by way of an order (a request for information), which can be transmitted through the network and to the appropriate server (where the circulation history, the transaction log is stored) (column 2, line 66 – col. 3, line 4). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention to combine the document circulation method provided by Goodale and Tsuji and the document circulation method of procuring transaction history of a circulation file as taught by Mori. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to perform such a combination as taught by Mori wherein a system is provided so that clients in a network system can stay informed easily by way of a transaction log which is easily accessible in the network provided (see Mori, col. 2, ll. 62-65).

28. Regarding claim 7, Goodale, Tsuji and Mori teach the work flow system wherein said circulation state information includes a state to which one of said plurality of circulation clients said document file for circulation is circulated, or a state with which

Art Unit: 2142

one of said plurality of circulation clients said document file is confirmed (Goodale, col. 12, ll. 32-36).

29. Regarding claim 8, Goodale, Tsuji and Mori teach the work flow system wherein said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients and having received said transmission completion report, deletes or makes it possible to delete said document file and said circulation information file from a memory portion (col. 10, ll. 53-56).

30. Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale and Tsuji in view of Murakami et al. (US 2002/0161746 A1), hereinafter referred to as Murakami.

31. Regarding claim 12, Goodale and Tsuji teach the circulation of a document does not clearly recite "wherein said circulation information file includes time limit information for circulation time limit of said document file; and said one of plurality of circulation clients, having received said document file and circulation information file, requests a approval operation of said document file when said circulation time limit of said time limit information is expired". However, in related art, Murakami teaches on this aspect. Murakami teaches the flow of information (i.e. circulation of documents from one client to the next in a networked system) wherein a expiration time is set as a parameter, called the set conditions for the advancement of a document within a network. Murakami teaches the ability for clients to "approve" of documents during the circulation cycle (see Murakami, page 4, paragraph [0080]). One of ordinary skill in the art at the

time of the applicant's invention would have found it obvious to teach the document circulation methods taught by Goodale with the document flow management methods taught by Murakami. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to make such a combination in order to enhance the management capabilities over the flow management of the document between clients and to decrease the time between a request made by a client and improve system availability (see Murakami, page 1, paragraph [0011-0012]).

32. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale and Tsuji in view of Phillips et al. (US 7,058,696 B1), hereinafter referred to as Phillips.

33. Regarding claim 13, Goodale and Tsuji teach the work flow system wherein "said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, sending said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients" (col. 2, ll. 8-14), however does not clearly teach the step wherein a transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients "encrypts said document file before sending said document file". However, in related art, Phillips teaches a client/server networked system wherein a client encrypts a document before transmitting the document over the network to a remote location, in this example a server (col. 6, ll. 38-41). One of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the applicant's invention would have found it obvious to combine the document circulation steps as taught by Goodale and Tsuji with the client/server document encryption/decryption methods taught by Phillips. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to utilize encryption techniques taught by Phillips in order to ensure security so that the client feels confident

Art Unit: 2142

that no one will be able to view private information once a submission is made to a remote location over the network being utilized (Phillips, col. 6, ll. 33-41).

Conclusion

34. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Artsy (US 5,701,484) teaches routing objects on action paths in a distributed computing system.

Kawasaki et al. (US 5,848,248) teaches an electronic document circulating system.

Tsuiki et al. (US 5,940,829) teaches a work flow management system.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Benjamin A. Ailes whose telephone number is (571)272-3899. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 6:30-4, IFP Work Schedule.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Andrew Caldwell can be reached on (571)272-3868. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 2142

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baa

Beatriz Prieto
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PRIMARY EXAMINER